



# Gender Inequality in Nigeria's National Assembly since the Fourth Republic

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## Abstract

## Original Research Article

Gender inequality is quite an enormous issue that have lingered all through different time. From time immemorial, women have always been reckoned as second-hand citizens when compared to their male counterpart. There has always been the marginalization and discrimination between men and women in all walks of life. Gender inequality represents the preference of men at the detriment of women. This has been made obvious in the industrial sector, educational sector, work environment, banking and finance sector and political sector. For this reason, this work will delve into the relationship between gender inequality and conflict management in Nigeria’s National Assembly since the Fourth Republic. The study showed that although women's rights to actively engage in politics were protected by the Nigerian constitution; yet, during the past ten years, women's involvement has increased relative to before. This is only the case when we use certain metrics to gauge the rise in involvement, such as the proportion of women who vote in elections, the number of women in public office, the number of government laws pertaining to women, etc. There has not been laudable and commendable participation of women in political positions in Nigeria and most parts of the world. This is also the case in the Nigeria’s National Assembly. Some factors that lead to the above include discriminatory culture and norms, religion, economic factors, educational factors, political factors and the rule of law. The study was anchored on the Relative Deprivation Theory which postulates that individuals who believe they are being denied something that is deemed necessary for their lives—such as money, rights, political voice, or status—may organize or participate in social movements or armed conflicts aimed at regaining the things they perceive to be missing. It is therefore recommended that women who are politically-inclined and have political ambitions should be encouraged and given due supports just like their male counterpart.

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, discrimination, National Assembly, Fourth Republic, patriarchy.

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## Introduction

Women have made substantial contributions to the welfare of humanity and make up half of the world's population. For example, women in Nigeria have long held the positions of social, cultural, and political activists, homemakers,

mothers, and community organizers. The distribution of duties between the sexes, as dictated by most civilizations, places women in an inferior position despite their numerous and vital roles. Women have so long experienced a variety of types of discrimination, injustice, and exclusion, particularly in the sphere of



government. Even while most civilizations exhibit signs of gender inequality and exploitation, many emerging nations face a more serious issue (Atu et al., 2019). The debate over whether gender disparity is good or bad has persisted in the worldwide discourse. There was previously some study that suggested that gender disparity may actually boost economic development. Other writers, however, have shown that gender disparity has a detrimental effect on the economy. Because it reduces wellbeing and is seen as an injustice in the very definition of equity, gender disparity is a troublesome issue. In the past, several Nigerian tribes gave preference to men in terms of inheritance and economic development. For example, when dividing land or any asset, the Igbos do not include women or girls in a will. It is believed that women are more suited to work in the kitchen and help out on the farm. They become reliant on and subordinate to their male counterpart as a result (Adeosun and Owolabi, 2021).

In recent times, discrimination occurs against both men and women in certain contexts, especially against the female or women group. The gender link is being used carelessly to indicate the disparate and unequal attitudes, duties, importance, or incentives that a society allocates to the two sex groups. The subjugation of women is an innate tradition that has been continuously maintained in an active condition, along with its incapacitating power. How to increase the role of women in politics and governance is one issue that challenges the mainstream goal of development as society struggles to establish a fair, just, and equitable arrangement among various individuals. Women are marginalized and subjected to discrimination in every human community. Women are a persistent worldwide epidemic (Anyalebechi, 2016). Discrimination against any citizen on the basis of sex, gender, age, tribe, etc. is forbidden under the Nigerian constitution. Nigeria's gender policy places a strong emphasis on women's empowerment and makes audacious promises to eradicate all types of gender discrimination (Ekeh, 2018).

According to Makama (2013), women's rights to actively engage in politics were protected by many Nigerian constitutions; yet, during the past ten years, women's involvement has increased relative to before. This is only the case when we use certain metrics to gauge the rise in involvement, such as the proportion of women who vote in elections, the number of women in public office, the number of government laws pertaining to women, etc. Given these criteria, Nigerian women's political engagement has increased dramatically over the years; nonetheless, there is still a significant degree of underrepresentation of women in politics as compared to males.

In the pre-independence days, Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti was a political figure in the 1950s and she was the only female member of the delegation sent to Britain to deliberate on the independence in Nigeria. In this period, not many were appointed. Those that were appointed were either junior ministers or commissioners in charge of youth, sport and culture in the Second Republic. In the Third Republic, out of 109 members of state, only 3 were females and out of 360 members of House of Representative, only 8 were females. Furthermore, during this present dispensation, out of 109 members of the Senate only 4 were females, representing approximately 3.7% of the Chamber. Again, out of 360 members of the House of Representatives, only 14 women serving as Reps. This represents approximately 3.9% of the total membership. This data is as at March 2025 (Businessday, 2025). Nigerian women stand on the same footing with their male counterpart whenever they were given the opportunity to perform. It is however, glaring that the political game of this country has been preserved exclusively for men. This has led to the conclusion that Nigerian women are not politically active than their male counterpart.

Much more recent in Nigeria politics, specifically in the Nigerian National Assembly, we have clearly seen the play of gender inequality, women deprivation and oppression and its obvious corresponding effect in the issue dwelling on sexual harassment allegation laid by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan representing

Kogi Central on the Senate President Godswill Akpabio which resulted in the Nigerian female senator being suspended for six (6) months. It was reported that Senator Natasha had earlier submitted affidavit on sexual harassment having accused Senate President Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment, abuse of office and obstruction of legislative duties. It has been alleged that the Senate Presidents Godswill Akpabio is fond of abusing women and Senator Natasha is just another victim. This is quite a public show of gender inequality playing within the borders of the Nigerian politics. Most likely, every woman has her own story to tell with regards to gender inequality in the nation in other ramifications and sectors such as education, religion, marriage, public offices, oil and gas, banking and finance amongst others. Looking at the present study, it may be opined that Nigeria women who are representative in Nigerian politics are already disadvantaged by reason of their gender; this is further worsened when they are in an enviable place or position of power dominated by their male counterpart. Thus, female candidate for the position of Legislator, Senator, Governor or President is likely not to be voted for; they have a slim chance of victory amongst their male counterpart. The men-support-women slogan is perceived as a taboo in most part of the world. It therefore becomes important to further delve on the issue of gender inequality and conflict management in Nigeria's National Assembly since the Fourth Republic – year 1999.

### Statement of the Problem

Due to the fact that women in Nigeria are perceived as being treated like second-class citizens and infidels, there is a widespread opinion that the "Kitchen" is the ideal setting for women. From the home level to the larger society, this approach has resulted in a massive distortion of women. One of the main characteristics of a traditional civilization is the patriarchal aspect of Nigerian society. It is a system of materially based social connections that gives men the ability to control women. As a result, women are frequently abused, prevented from obtaining formal education, and maintained

as domestic servants for life. The typical Nigerian woman is viewed as a misfit in society, a potential target for forced marriage, prostitution, street peddling, and trafficking. Thus, an ordinary woman has been reduced to a lower commodity due to the alleged irrelevance of women's standing in society (Makama, 2013).

The advancement of society is hampered by gender inequality and its effects. There is no question about how gender disparity affects women's involvement in government and how it affects Nigeria's political evolution. Previous studies have also shown that males are the primary determinants of political acts and inactions that are typically related to the maintenance of state authority. As a result, women compete with males for political power based on the criteria that men have already set for their own competition. Accordingly, women's political success, like that of any other group, cannot be attained inside a system without uprooting or replacing the current elite (Atu et al., 2019).

On a worldwide scale, low female engagement in politics and governance has been a serious problem. Other than casting ballots in elections, women's involvement in politics in Nigeria is out of proportion to the population they represent, and this has not translated into equitable representation in positions of political leadership. Nigeria recognized women in politics and included them in both elective and appointed positions as a result of the global issue of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) goal 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women) and other international clarion calls for closing the gap created by long-standing discrimination against women and making women visible in politics (Dalha, 2023). Given that the subject matter on gender inequality is raging fire and brimstone in both the Nigerian and African politics, it becomes a thing worthy of investigation to examine gender inequality and conflict management in Nigeria's National Assembly since the Fourth Republic. This is intended to find ways forward to further strengthen and encourage women representation in the Nigerian politics. The Nigerian Constitution with regards to Franchise is likely

not to be fully upheld and implemented in the face of gender inequality. The right and freedom to vote and be voted for may be robbed off the Nigeria female gender if immediate solution is not proffered to the challenge pondering around gender inequality. It is insinuated that gender inequality may pose enormous conflict in political offices at legislative, executive and judicial levels. A major instance is the aforementioned ordeal between the Kogi Centra Senator Natasha and the Senate Presidents Godswill Akpabio. It is worthy to note that the whole world is watching Nigerian politics and transition in democratic governance especially in this information and technology age. Every news story on Nigerian politics (whether good or bad) spreads round the world in just a matter of minutes; this may not tell good of Nigeria politically and this has the ability to affect the nation adversely in no small ways. At this point, it can be made laudable that the Nigerian character is at stake both within and outside the Nigerian borders. Gender inequality must be dealt with as to minimize the rate of conflict eruption in the Nigeria's National Assembly as this will help enforce sustainability of the Fourth Republic. Thus, this work will determine whether gender inequality affects conflict management in the Nigeria's National Assembly since the Fourth Republic (1999) till date.

### Concept of Gender Inequality

The societal phenomenon of unequal treatment of men and women is known as gender inequality. Differences in genetics, psychology, or societally accepted cultural standards may give birth to the therapy. The disparities between the sexes in terms of money, status, power, health, and employment are also referred to as gender inequality. Gender inequality occurs when these disparities are unjust and preventable. Opportunities and results are two aspects of the complex idea of gender inequality (Adeosun and Owolabi, 2021). Women have been subjugated to male dominance everywhere in the globe because gender inequality and its associated effects impede social advancement (Atu et al., 2019).

According to Raheem and Garuba (2017), gender inequality is the uneven treatment of people depending on their gender, which results from variations in socially established gender roles. Another definition of gender inequality is the result of sexism, which is bias or discrimination against individuals on the basis of their gender or sex. Its effects start at birth and mostly affect women and girls. Lower rates of education and employment, lower compensation for comparable work, higher stress levels, a greater prevalence of unpaid labor, such as caring for ill family members, exposure to higher rates of sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, and gender-based violence, and a lack of representation in government are just a few quantifiable ways that gender inequality impacts women globally when compared to men. The emotional and physical well-being of women and girls, as well as those of other oppressed genders, is greatly impacted by all of these factors (Azmat et al., 2006).

According to a research by Dalha (2023), gender inequality shows itself as hierarchical gendered interactions in which women are viewed as less important and inferior simply because of their sex, while males are ranked above women. It is acknowledged that males in less developed nations also suffer from practices and laws that promote hierarchical gender relations, despite the literature's preponderance of female subjects. Home ties, inheritance laws and practices, the value placed on women's labor and its overall invisibility, and the authority to make choices in the workplace, the home, society, and religion and other cultural organizations are all examples of gender hierarchy in action.

According to Kay (2008), as cited in Raheem and Garuba (2017), gender equality is the state in which men and women have equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of society, including economic participation, decision-making, and the process by which men's and women's needs are equally recognized and given preference. The practice of treating women unfairly while favoring males is encouraged by gender inequity. In general, it forbids women and men from enjoying socially valued opportunities, resources, rewards, and products on an equal

basis. It implies that women and men are not and never will be the same. The male gender is prioritized above the feminine gender. The vast majority of known cultures are impacted by gender disparity, making it the most widespread vector of human inequity. Inequalities of class, race, ethnicity, heteronormative sexual orientation, etc., exacerbate it in many modern countries, especially in the globalized Western world (Jacobsen, 2011).

The perceived or real uneven treatment of people depending on their gender is known as gender inequality. Cultural variations in gender roles, which are socially built structures, are the root cause of gender disparity. Gender inequality is a kind of societal discrimination, even if men and women have biological sex-based disparities that are inherent (Wani & Dastidar, 2018). The term "gender inequality" describes how people are treated and given chances differently depending on their gender. It is a widespread type of inequality that has an impact on cultures all over the world and interacts with other types of inequality including sexual orientation, race, and class. Power dynamics and social interactions are the foundation of gender inequality, since males have traditionally held a dominant position over women in a variety of areas of life. It is often accepted that women make the best housewives (William, 2016).

### Causes of Gender Inequality

Discrimination and gender inequity start early in life. In their families, schools, and communities, girls and boys are subjected to gender norms and social standards from birth that impact their expectations, access to resources, and opportunities throughout their lives. For instance, boys are frequently urged to complete their education in order to prepare for the workforce, but girls are prevented from attending school due to their onerous home duties, which raises the risk of child marriage and pregnancy (Plan International, 2025). The globe has come closer to attaining gender equality throughout time. Women are better represented in politics and have more employment options, but there are

a number of variables that contribute to gender equality, which will be examined below;

- **Unequal Access to Education:** Women still face barriers to education globally compared to males. Approximately 25% of all young women aged 15 to 24 will not complete primary school. About 58% of those who do not finish that foundational education fall into that category. Women rank first among the world's illiterate population. Girls' future and the possibilities they will have are greatly impacted when they are not given the same quality of education as boys.
- **Lack of Equality in Unemployment:** Research indicates that only a small number of nations worldwide grant women the same legal rights to work as men. Women only have the same legal rights to work as males in around six (6) nations worldwide. In actuality, women only have three-quarters ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of men's rights in the majority of economies. Research has also demonstrated that a more level playing field in the workplace has a favorable knock-on impact on other domains where gender disparity is likely to occur.
- **Job Segregation:** The separation of jobs is one factor contributing to gender imbalance in the workplace. There is an ingrained notion in most countries that males are just more capable of performing particular tasks. In most cases, those are the highest paying positions. Women earn less as a result of this prejudice. Women also perform the majority of unpaid labor, therefore even if women work in the paid employment, they still do additional work that is never compensated.
- **Lack of physical autonomy:** When they become parents, many women worldwide lack control over their own bodies. Birth contraception is often quite difficult to obtain. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 200 million women who wish to avoid

becoming pregnant do not use contraception. This is due to a number of factors, including restricted availability, a lack of alternatives, and religious and cultural resistance. Approximately 40% of pregnancies worldwide are unplanned, and 38% of them end in births, compared to 50% that end in abortion. These moms frequently lose their independence and become financially reliant on others or the government.

- **Lack of Political Representation:** At the start of 2019, women held just 24.3% of the seats in all national parliaments. Eleven heads of state were female as of June 2019. Women continue to be glaringly underrepresented in politics and governance, despite years of improvement in this area. This implies that several of the topics that female politicians frequently raise—such as childcare and parental leave, pensions, legislation promoting gender equality, and gender-based violence—are frequently overlooked.
- **Lack of Religious Freedom:** Women bear the brunt of attacks on religious freedom. The World Economic Forum claims that gender disparity worsens when extreme ideologies (like ISIS) infiltrate a society and impose restrictions on religious freedom. Researchers were also able to link religious intolerance with women's economic participation in a study conducted by Georgetown University and Brigham Young University. Women's involvement makes an economy more stable when there is greater religious freedom.
- **Absence of legal safeguards:** The absence of legal protections for women is another factor contributing to gender inequality. Legal protections against domestic economic and sexual abuse are nonexistent for women. Both significantly affect women's capacity to prosper and lead free lives. Legal safeguards against harassment at work,

school, and in public are also lacking in many nations. Without protection, these settings turn dangerous, and women are often forced to make choices that restrict and compromise their objectives (Soken-Huberty, 2022).

### Issues Arising As A Result of Gender Inequality in Nigeria's National Assembly

There are differing views on whether women's roles should be mostly at home or if they may participate in socioeconomic and governmental activities as effectively as males in order to fulfill their share in the development of society. However, the reality is that the social and cultural roles that women perform in each given community are decided and allocated to the male and female genders. Therefore, the norms of society are the outcome of gender roles and interactions that lead to inequality (domination or discrimination). The foundation of women's efforts to participate in governance is the belief that, as they make up half of the population, they ought to have an equal say in national government and decision-making. Additionally, women have the same rights as males to engage in public life and administration, and all people are created equal. According to Atu et al. (2019), all citizens are legally entitled to democratic government.

Nigeria does not have an election gender quota system, in contrast to many other African nations. This is important because policies like gender quotas and proportional representation are thought to be good ways to boost women's political involvement in general and in particular to offer them more access to leadership positions in political parties and the legislative process. Although it is particularly noticeable in northern Nigeria, underrepresentation of women in electoral politics is undoubtedly a national issue in Nigeria. No woman has ever been elected to either the state House of Assembly or the national House of Representatives in Kano, a populous northern state, according to research by The Sunday Punch, a nationally distributed daily. The two main political parties, the PDP and the APC, did not field female candidates for

the National Assembly in 19 states in 2019, while 17 northern states did not elect women to their House of Assembly. Northern Nigeria's female underrepresentation is comparable to that of many African nations prior to the implementation of quotas, which expanded women's political sphere and led to a rise in the number of female lawmakers (Ette and Akpan-Obong, 2023).

Since women make up a sizable portion of a country's population, they ought to be included in decision-making and government. Women are capable of taking charge and advancing the country. Only a small number of women have been elected to the executive and legislative branches, which are dominated by men. The proportion of women in elected or appointed posts has not significantly increased, despite increased awareness and a national drive to encourage women's involvement in government. If women continue to be underrepresented in public decision-making, the democratic evolution of the country is seriously threatened. Therefore, it becomes crucial to determine the causes preventing Nigerian women from participating in politics. Women's political representation and engagement have been shown to be hampered by a number of issues (Oyindamola and Olaniyan, 2020).

Participation is defined as the political decisions made by citizens, their rights to choose their leaders, and their ability to hold the government accountable. Therefore, establishing political groups, casting a ballot, participating in decision-making, holding public office or party positions, and engaging in other political activities are all common examples of participation. Equal representation is both a goal and an ideal that is connected to the idea of democracy itself. Parliaments ensure and promote citizen participation in political processes. In order to prevent a "representation deficit," it has been suggested that "women should share, equally with men, public decision-making positions because they are equal citizens." One measure of a state's level of political representation is the percentage of women in parliament. Electoral systems affect

the proportion of women representation in parliaments (Dan-Azumi and Asan, 2021).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has not only failed to achieve considerable progress in women's participation in parliament and cabinet posts, but it has also continuously regressed in worldwide ranking, according to Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), despite the continent's glowing statistics. Twelve women were elected to the House of Representatives and three to the Senate when the current democratization phase started in 1999. The number of women in the Senate increased to eight in 2007 after two election cycles, but fell to seven in 2011. Twenty women were elected to the House of Representatives and seven to the Senate in 2015. There were just eleven women in the lower house four years later. In general, women's involvement in elective and appointive posts has been approximately 6% nationwide, which is less than the 15% sub-regional average for West Africa. According to the 2021 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, Nigeria ranked 149th (out of 155 nations) in terms of political empowerment in January 2021, with 10.3% of women in cabinet posts (three out of 29) and 5.8% of women in parliament. Out of 35 sub-Saharan African nations, it comes in at number 32, only surpassed by Chad, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

According to Section 42 (1) of the same constitution, a Nigerian citizen who belongs to a certain community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political viewpoint cannot be subjected to discrimination based solely on his or her identity. This subsection expressly forbids sex-based discrimination in the political process. Given the aforementioned clauses, nothing in the Nigerian constitution precludes women from taking part in administration. However, in reality, socially created gender norms lead to a startling level of discrimination against women. In the country's general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011, a small and inconsequential number of women were elected to various positions. Men dominate most public offices till date. No woman has been elected either as a governor of a state or the president of the federation. We only had few women as members

of the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) and as members of state Houses of Assembly across the country (Atu et al., 2019).

Furthermore, a case study of the conflict in the National Assembly between Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan and Senate President Godswill Akpabio. The conflict between both of them began with a dispute over seating arrangements in the Senate Chamber. On February 20, 2025, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's seat was reassigned, a change she opposed, leading to a heated exchange with Senate President Akpabio and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan. Following the incident, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan alleged that her challenges in the Senate started after she rejected inappropriate advances from Akpabio. She claimed that during a visit to Akpabio's residence on December 8, 2023, he made unwelcomed remarks suggesting they spend private time together. Additionally, she alleged that Akpabio implied her legislative initiatives would progress if she acquiesced to his personal requests. On March 5<sup>th</sup> 2025, the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions dismissed Senator Akpoti Natasha's sexual harassment petition against Akpabio. The Committee cited procedural grounds, specifically that she violated senate order 40(4) by personally signing the petition which is against the rules. Following the dismissal, Senator Natasha was suspended for six months due to allegedly "unruly and disruptive" behaviour during senate proceedings. This suspension has been met with criticism from women's rights groups and sparked protest against the banner "We are all Natasha", highlighting concerns about gender inequality in Nigerian politics. In response to her suspension and the dismissal of her petition, Senator Natasha has initiated legal proceedings against Senate President Akpabio, seeking redress for her allegations (Sahara Reporters, 2025).

This case between Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan and Senate President Akpabio is highly significant to this research because it exposes systemic issues that women in Nigerian politics face; they are highlighted below thus:

- ❖ Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's case reflects institutional barriers that women encounter in legislative spaces.
- ❖ The senate's decision to suspend her for six months following allegations of sexual harassment against the Senate President suggests that powerful male figures in politics can suppress women who challenge them
- ❖ Natasha's suspension aligns with a pattern where women in politics who raise concerns about gender mistreatment face backlash rather than support
- ❖ This discourages more women from coming forward and highlights the imbalance in accountability mechanisms for men and women in politics.
- ❖ That "We Are All Natasha" movement suggests that women and activists see this as a broader issue of gender inequality in governance.
- ❖ Media coverage shows how gender biases affect narratives in political discourse
- ❖ This case supports arguments for stronger protections for female legislators, including policies on harassment, whistleblower, protection, and fair disciplinary processes.
- ❖ It underscores the need for more women in leadership roles to challenge the male-dominated political structure.

### Show of Gender Inequality in Nigeria Politics

There has not been enough focus on gender disparity in Nigerian politics. In societal organizations where gender disparities are institutionalized, gender disparity is frequently severe. Gender inequality and the ensuing gender gap may be explained by cultural prejudices. Human rights have consistently been violated by gender disparity, leading to discrimination against women and rights abuse. The cruel treatment of women in particular prompted a demand for gender self-awareness, which in turn

led to women's participation in political affairs (Mordi, 2022).

Since it is believed that there are no constitutional restrictions on women's involvement, the political enfranchisement of women in Nigerian politics appears to have preserved a degree of gender parity on the surface. However, in practice, this does not occur in Nigerian politics. Women have been underrepresented in government since 1999, when democratic governance first began. In order to address this gender prejudice against women, the National Gender Policy of 2006 should be fully implemented, as women are underrepresented in both elective and appointed posts. The right of both men and women to participate in government was guaranteed under Section 40 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. Despite the fact that there are now more women in both elective and appointed posts than there were in 1999, women are still noticeably underrepresented in comparison to males (Atu et al., 2019).

The lack of greater political engagement or expansion of the political sphere for women complicates the path towards democratic consolidation, which was strengthened by the 2019 elections. Two decades after the last military dictatorship, women are still underrepresented in elected seats and political leadership roles, despite the Nigerian Constitution's statutory representation clause. In addition to being mostly invisible in the political sphere, Nigerians—including women themselves—continue to hold the unchangeable belief that politics is a male domain and that women who dabble in it are "outliers." According to Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), women face a variety of difficulties when they enter the "male terrain" of politics. Furthermore, women hardly appear in the nation's political history. Since Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, no woman has ever been elected governor, president, or vice president. It must be emphasized, therefore, that women's political rights continue to be a crucial component of human rights, and that women's rights in general are an unavoidable feature of every democratic system. Political parties, the media, and civil

society groups are some of the most crucial institutions for encouraging and fostering women's political engagement, which is essential to these objectives. The achievement of gender equality and the full involvement and representation of women in decision-making are important markers of democracy as these two factors are fundamental to democracy. This is due to the fact that democracy and the achievement of women's rights depend on women's involvement in decision-making at all levels and in all areas of society (Ayetigbo and Ayetigbo, 2022).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 constitution's section II on non-discrimination prohibited gender discrimination on social issues in the conduct of social transactions in both government and private establishments, according to a study by Raheem and Garuba (2017). However, despite this constitutional provision, men and women in Nigeria were not given equal opportunities to advance socially, physically, educationally, politically, and economically. In Nigeria, there is ample evidence that a number of detrimental aspects of gender relations, including gender-based division of labor, unequal access to power and resources for men and women, and gender biases in rights and entitlements, are still prevalent in both military and paramilitary placements and political appointments at all levels of government.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution, the supreme standard, offers the framework that guides the division of power within the Federation. As a result, the 1999 Constitution's Sections 4 (1) and 4 (7) guarantee the legislature's ability to enact laws at both the federal and state levels (FGN, 1999). The 36 Subnational Legislative Houses and the National Assembly both enact laws to promote law and order, as well as good administration in the states and the Federation, respectively. Five Federal and State Legislative Assemblies have been elected since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999. 1999–2003, 2003–2007, 2007–2011, 2011–2015, and 2015–2019 are these. The majority of both national and state legislative chambers have experienced some kind of crisis

or conflict. Internal, external, or a combination of both forces drove each of these crises or conflicts. These disputes have influenced the course toward democratic consolidation in addition to endangering the democratic process (Egobueze et al., 2020).

"The participation of women in governance however falls short of the desired 30% by international standards and 35% as entrenched in the National Gender Policy 2006," claims Olurode (2012 referenced in Atu et al., 2019). In the 2007 elections, women made up only 9% of the Nigerian Senate, 9.27% of the House of Representatives, 5.45% of the State Houses of Assembly, and 0% of the elective offices of governor and president, he said, demonstrating the glaring underrepresentation of women in elective positions and the electoral process. When women only received 7.3% and 6.1% of Senate and House of Representatives seats, respectively, in the 2011 national elections, the situation deteriorated. Another major obvious show of gender inequality is the ordeal between Kogi Central Senator Natasha and Senate President Godswill Akpabio. The issue of sexual harassment as alleged by the female Senator was quickly quietened as perceived by a sect of the public; and the resultant effect was the seemingly oppression, intimidation of the female senator while melting to her a six-month suspension. This will likely not be the case if the alleged or accused was a female and the accuser was a male. This shows enormously the act and practice of gender inequality within the Nigerian political space. But what is the attendant effect on the Nigerian political stride? As Mr. Peter Obi, the 2023 Presidential Candidate under the flagship of Labour Party (LP), puts it "the Nigerian democracy has been striving gradually and progressively; since 1999, in which the first democratic president laid the foundation and took it to decker level; some others continued it and took it to first floor level; some others took over and brought the building of the Nigerian democracy to the second floor; while some others just came in and destroyed the full structure. This is likely to be the case of the Nigerian politics in the presence of gender inequality.

### **Socio-Cultural and Political Factors of Gender Inequality and Discrimination**

- **Patriarchy Discrimination:** Women's relationships in all areas, including politics, are shaped by patriarchy, a system of male dominance. It creates a hierarchy of gender relations in which men are favored and changes males and females into men and women. In the last twenty years, the term "patriarchy" has been reimagined to examine the causes and circumstances of men's subjugation of women. The word "patriarchy," which was first used to refer to the authority of the father as the head of the family, has been adopted in post-1960s feminism to refer to the institutionalized system of male dominance and female submission. According to one definition, the phrase refers to a male-dominated system that uses its social, political, and economic structures to oppress women. They describe patriarchy as an oppressive societal structure that is unfair to women. The term "patriarchy" in feminist theory frequently refers to any social structures that perpetuate and enforce male supremacy over women (Makama, 2013). According to a number of literary works, Nigeria was a very patriarchal culture where men dominated every aspect of women's life. In Nigeria, the majority of parents preferred male offspring over female children, and women are viewed as inferior at the communal and household levels. Nigerian women and men's social interactions and activities are regulated by a patriarchal system of socialization and cultural practices that prioritize men's interests over women's, especially in settings where males predominate (Raheem and Garuba, 2017).
- **Gender Roles and Livelihoods:** Inequitable employment privileges and incentives in Nigerian cities and rural areas are also influenced by institutional practices and views about gender roles. Male employees benefited from child

care tax benefits, but female employees (including divorced women with children in their care, married women who provide for their families, and single moms) typically pay comparatively higher taxes as a result of being excluded from this advantage. Men are also excluded by gender-based norms from performing domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the elderly and children, which are solely the duty of women and do not decrease when they work for a living (Raheem and Garuba, 2017).

- **Economy Sector:** Gender inequality in society as a whole, encompassing all sectors, is the primary cause of the unequal development and feminization of poverty, as seen by the stark differences between men and women. It is estimated that 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, with approximately 65% of women being among them. Males are more likely to hold stable, well-paying jobs. The aforementioned differences impact both men's and women's ability to contribute to the nation's economic development. The government's desired value reorientation aim and the reform agenda's endeavor to lower the reliance ratio inside the family unit.
- **Division of Labor and Career Progression:** It seems that the two sexes in Nigeria differ significantly in terms of income-generating activities. An illustration of this would be the industrial sector, where women's participation is 11% but men's is 30%. The majority of women worked in the unregulated and informal economy. Women made up almost 87% of the workforce in the service industry. Women are underrepresented in industries that generate revenue and are primarily defined by hard manual labor, including mining and quarrying.
- **Legal and Human Rights:** Nigeria, like most nations, is governed by a set of laws that regulate important public and private relationships. One such example is the institution of marriage, which is governed and can be entered into under a number of provisions of the common law, Sharia law, statutory law, and customary law systems. In instances and cases when women seek restitution against their spouses for violations committed, the way such laws are read and enforced is sometimes sensitive to personal factors and varies greatly. Traditions, prejudice against women, and unwritten family law may make this more difficult, particularly when it comes to divorce, property succession, and child custody. Making sure that laws and policies are created to safeguard women's rights and interests in society is the main task facing activists for women's rights and practitioners of gender development.
- **Gender Based Violence:** Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence has grown to be a significant problem in Nigeria and throughout Africa in recent years. This illustrates how seriously women's rights are being attacked. It also leads to a scenario where women are unable to voice their opinions on a variety of subjects that touch and worry their lives. In today's world, violence is pervasive and has made women more susceptible to HIV/AIDS. This is especially true of domestic abuse and rape against women. The custom of female genital mutilation, which is against fundamental rights and poses a serious risk to a woman's health for the rest of her life. Nigerian women have suffered greatly as a result of this damaging custom, which is intended to regulate women's sexuality. The fundamental motivation for this behavior is the unfavorable belief that women are less valuable than males and should be viewed as second-class members of society (Egobueze et al., 2020).

### Theoretical Framework (Relative Deprivation Theory)

The study is anchored on the Relative Deprivation Theory. Feeling that you are typically in poorer shape than the individuals you hang out with and compare yourself to is known as relative deprivation. For instance, you feel somewhat impoverished when you can only afford a hut while your neighbor has a large home. The conscious perception of a negative disparity between reasonable expectations and current reality is known as relative deprivation. According to proponents of relative deprivation theory, the distribution of wealth as well as the absolute degree of economic well-being are key factors in determining political unrest and its aftereffects, such as protest, instability, violence, and revolution. Relative deprivation theory, as defined by social and political scientists, postulates that individuals who believe they are being denied something that is deemed necessary for their lives—such as money, rights, political voice, or status—may organize or participate in social movements or armed conflicts aimed at regaining the things they perceive to be missing (Nagel, 1974).

The purpose of this study is to explain the circumstances that led citizens to revolt against the state or established authority using the relative deprivation theory as a guide. Thus, it maintains that an individual or group of persons' relative impoverishment is most likely the cause of the act of revolt. Gurr (1970) states in his book *Why Men Rebel* that a disparity between expected and actual socioeconomic and political chances is a manifestation of relative deprivation. According to him, a sense of relative deprivation leads to collective dissatisfaction, which in turn causes various forms of political violence. According to this theory, societal evils like terrorism, armed banditry, and armed robbery are caused by the state's inability to fulfill its expected role in the lives of its citizens. The writings of the best proponents of relative deprivation provide insight into what it means. In furtherance of this analysis, Ted Gurr (1970) argues that people become dissatisfied if they feel they have less than they should and could have. Such discontent eventually breeds

annoyance, which in turn breeds revolt against the apparent or actual cause of their deprivation. The frustration aggression theory, which held that insecurity results from the state's inability to provide effective governance capable of delivering vital services to the governed without frustration, is simply justified by this postulation, which links relative deprivation theory to it. Furthermore, it is maintained that constituted authority negligence, which frequently led to structural poverty and inequality inside nations, is a driving force behind instability, including terrorism, organized crime, and insurgency (Adamu and Nma, 2020).

Relative deprivation has occasionally been mentioned as a contributing cause to social disorder events such as civil wars, terrorism, looting, and riots. In this sense, the complaints of those who believe they are not receiving resources to which they are entitled are frequently the cause of social movements and the disorderly behavior that goes along with them. As a result, the relative deprivation paradigm is quite similar to the grievance viewpoint and offers a methodological foundation and conceptual space for understanding armed conflict. Relative deprivation theory's central claim is that conflict is an essential component of the human experience rather than just a fleeting social phenomenon. Individuals or communities who feel deprived of resources or goods are more inclined to engage in conflict; they are more likely to resort to violent conflict in an attempt to improve their material circumstances. Conflict has its roots in society.

The application of this theory with relation to the present study holds that if Nigeria women continue to be neglected, marginalized, oppressed and unjustly discriminated, it therefore would not be a thing of news that they begin to become 'a pain in the ass'. No human takes oppression and illegal discrimination for too long. This happens everywhere; in religious places, in the homes, in the market, at workplace among others. This is obvious in the drama between Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan and the Senate President Godswill Akpabio. She had earlier reported that the Senate President had before now made advances on her sexually and

promised to treat her specially if she would make him happy. It was allegedly reported that upon her turning down the offer, the Senate President started oppressing her and giving her unsweet hands of fellowship. She would submit things for approval and would be rejected, thrown away or kept without any place to attend to such issues. This had continued for a while until when the female Senator could not take it anymore. This led to an outburst of both pain, anger, rejection and frustration. It therefore holds that if gender inequality is continually upheld or practiced within the Nigerian political space by male members of the House of Representative or House of General Assembly to the detriment of female house members in the Nigeria's National Assembly, then chaos and conflict will be the order of the day at every sitting. We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and everyone both young and old is getting wiser and more informed; there is rising knowledge with the increasing technology world all over. This puts the female politician in a state where she can take advantage of a potent tool like the media and fight back for her right. Thus, gender inequality is inversely proportional to conflict management in Nigeria's National Assembly in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic.

### Conclusion

Women have made tremendous progress in closing some gender inequalities and have advanced significantly in many other areas throughout the years. Nonetheless, the severely unequal distribution of the weight of adversity between men and women is a defining feature of the troubled society in which we live. Due to women's and girls' lack of rights, human society has lost a great deal of potential. Inequalities persist despite the fact that governments all around the world have taken some action to better the lives of women. Women's economic empowerment, professional development, educational achievement, access to high-quality healthcare, and political aspirations are all significantly impacted by gender inequality, which is a complicated issue that endures in many domains. It is popularly mentioned that we live in a man's word and this perception and mindset puts the woman in a perpetual

continuum disadvantage making her less preferred to the man in virtually all ramifications. In no region of the developing world, women are equal to men in educational, social, economic spheres and even politics.

There cannot be sustainable peace and adequate conflict resolution in a place where gender equality, as contained and upheld by the Nigeria Constitution, is side-lined. If the Nigeria's National Assembly in the Fourth Republic must advance speedily to the next level, then the female members in the prestigious Houses of Representatives and Senate must be adored, respected and not discriminated. They must be welcomed with open arms and given equal rights and privileges as their male counterparts; then, this will foster peace and easily shun conflict. It is concluded that conflict management in the Nigeria's National Assembly is only feasible in an atmosphere of gender equality.

### Recommendations

**The following are hereby recommended by the Researcher among other things to curb the problem discussed in the present study:**

1. Women who are politically-inclined and have political ambitions should be encouraged and given due supports just like their male counterpart.
2. Nigerians' wrong perspectives and perceptions about gender inequality should be corrected and a balance should be created to avoid excess feminism either. All and sundry should be educated about women's rights, contributions, and social worth.
3. Purposive law should grant women equal access to productive resources (land, labor, etc.). Such legislation ought to contain provisions that ensure parental inheritance rights, regardless of gender, and that the law be strictly enforced, with suitable penalties applied to those who violate it.

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